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ABSTRACT

Three groups of adult second language learners were administered written tests of their knowledge of the grammar, morphology, and/or phonology of the second language. The tests were designed to distinguish between recognition of correctness based on knowledge of rules and recognition based on intuitive familiarity with the language. In the first test, 52 students of English as a Second Language (ESL) were asked to determine the grammatical acceptibility of sentences containing errors in count/mass and singular/plural distinction, article usage, and tense. Twenty-six percent of judgments were made on the basis of intuition. Eleven intermediate ESL students were then asked to mark English sentences for stress. Although markings were very accurate, subjects were generally unable to adduce a rule to support their decisions. Rule-giving increased when students were re-tested after taking a series of lessons on stress placement rules. Finally, 18 intermediate students of German made rule judgments for 51% of items on inflectional morphology, but for only 35% of items on word order. Implications of these results for determining the place of rules and formal grammatical knowledge in second language learning are discussed. (JB)

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# The Basis for Grammaticality Judgments in Adult Second Language Performance

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In making grammaticality judgments, native speakers (unless they are English teachers) generally do not appeal to conscious knowledge about language. If we ask "the man on the street" whether a sentence like

(1) *There were much people at the concert.

is grammatical, he would say "no", would be able to correct it, but would probably be unable to tell you anything about count and mass nouns. This is the case because native speakers generally refer to what Chomsky (1965) calls their "tacit knowledge" of their language in making such judgments. It is this tacit knowledge, according to Chomsky, that linguistic descriptions should attempt to describe. In other words, the native speaker does not typically use whatever explicit and conscious rules he may have learned about English in school. Nor, we think, do teachers really expect native speakers to take grammar lessons as instructions for performance, except in cases where the student's dialect differs from the prestige.

For adult second language performers, however, grammar lessons are often intended to be instructions on how to perform. Many teachers expect that the rules given in class will be used in performance and often assume that rule giving helps the student, in that conscious rule use is a desirable first step toward fluent and automatic use of a structure. Thus, one would expect that ESL performers would typically be able to refer to a rule when making grammaticality judgments. If a second language performer responds as a native speaker would, indicating that the sentence "feels" or "sounds" correct, we can conclude that either the rules have been discarded or that the structure was acquired by some other means.

An informal case against the extreme position that rules must precede fluent L2 performance can easily be built. Everyone knows of many adults, often unschooled, who "pick up" second languages without grammar study. Their performance is often imperfect, but they demonstrate a command of much of English syntax.

Krashen (1976, 1977a, 1977b) has posited a model for adult second language performance that implies that the adult second language performer does indeed develop a "feel" for aspects of his second language and may gain native-like intuitions. Specifically, it is argued that adults may acquire language naturally and subconsciously, as children do, as well as consciously learn. Acquisition, moreover, appears to be more central than learning. Second language performers

apply conscious rules only when their attention is on grammatical form and enough processing time is available for rules to be applied. Natural language acquisition may thus be involved when subjects report on grammaticality on the basis of "feel", and learning may be involved when conscious rules are used.

A basic goal of current research testing Krashen's "Monitor Model" is to determine just what grammatical domain is acquired and what is learned in typical L2 performance. Our report is an attempt to gather data that will answer this question by asking adult second language performers for the bases of their grammaticality judgments. Multiple choice grammar-type tests were administered to several groups of subjects, described below, in which subjects were asked to choose a correct sentence from a group of sentences, and then to indicate how they made their judgment, i.e.

Why did you make this selection?
1. It feels/seems right.
2. You know and use the grammar rule.

Subjects who selected the second option were asked to write the rule. We were not rigid in marking the statement of the rule.

There are some immediate problems with this approach. First, it relies on self-report and potentially unreliable intuitions. While much current syntactic theory also rests on this shakey foundation, this remains a problem. Second, any use of a pencil and paper test that even mentions the possibility of the use of conscious rules encourages the use of these rules to a large degree, especially among students who have been taught by rule. Such measures, then, may underestimate the use of "feel", or language acquisition, and a finding of a significant amount of the use of "feel" on such a test is important.

We administered several tests in different domains in an attempt to describe and eventually characterize the domain of acquisition and learning. The areas chosen were based on our own intuitions as second language performers and on evidence from published case histories. Our initial hypothesis was that "easy" rules, that is, rules that are easy to describe and conceptualize, will tend to be learned. Easy rules, we felt, are less cumbersome to carry around as mental baggage; these include generalizations that have few exceptions, that involve straight-forward semantics and pragmatics, and that cover a small syntactic domain (e.g. a phrase rather than a complex sentence). Some published case histories support this hypothesis. For example, "P", described by Krashen and Pon (1975), who was an advanced ESL performer who could self-correct nearly

every error she made in casual speech, made errors mostly on such elementary things as the third person singular ending for regular verbs, errors dealing with the count/mass distinction, and the omission of plural endings on nouns. ESL students Ue-lin and Eve, described by Cohen and Robbins (1976), also made such errors, which they regarded as "careless" and correctable. Duškova (1969) reported that her EFL students' written errors in bound morphology, such as the omission of noun plurals and subject-verb agreement errors were self-correctable "by rule", that is, for many of these errors "... the learner is aware of it when it is pointed out ... and can correct it himself." Moreover, "the student can certainly formulate the rule." (p. 20)

On the other hand, more complex rules, like article use, which involve extra-sentential and some subtle semantic considerations, may be done, at least in part, by "feel". In fact, at least one textbook author implicitly encourages acquisition for mastery of the article: Rutherford, in Modern English volume one (p. 127) advises that "the way to learn the correct use of the articles is more through practice than close study of the rules and their many exceptions."

We describe now four preliminary studies that probe rule/feel judgments in second language performance.

I. English as a Second Language: count/mass, articles, singular/plural, tense.

Table one shows our results on a pencil and paper test of grammatical acceptability of the sort described above for selected structures of English (reported in more detail in Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum, and Robertson, 1976). We report here on 52 ESL performers, 45 of whom were enrolled in ESL courses at the American Language Institute at USC. The major result was that "feel" responses do occur at an overall frequency of 26%, despite the rule-bias of the test, and in fact predominate for article judgments. This confirms the reality of adult acquisition.

II. English as a Second Language: Stress

A similar procedure was used to examine stress judgments in ESL. Subjects in this pilot study were 11 intermediate level ALI students. They were given simple sentences, such as

(2) The boys will fix the car.

and were asked to indicate where stress would fall. For example, a correct marking of sentence (2) would be

(3) The boys will fix the car.

Again, we asked the students to write the rule (e.g. "Content words are stressed, function words are not."). The results are given in table two, which suggests that students utilize conscious rules for stress very little and are nevertheless quite accurate in stress placement on this sort of test. The results of a classroom experiment carried out by one of us (K.R.) are also presented in table two. A series of lessons on stress placement rules was taught to the students who took the test. These students were re-tested with the identical measure after the instruction (the instruction took about three hours of classtime). The same students were tested again two weeks later. A marked increase in rule-giving was found (again, please note that this sort of test is quite "rule-biased") with a modest gain in accuracy. After two weeks, rule report dropped a bit, as did accuracy. This mini-experiment suggests that "real" rule use in slight for stress placement, that is, in "monitor-free" situations (Krashen, 1977), performers do not appeal to conscious rules. Also, teaching rules for stress probably helps performance on monitored tests, that is, tests where subjects have time and are focussed on form, but to a modest degree.

III. German as a Foreign Language

Table three presents data from 18 third semester students of German as a foreign language at USC. We had predicted, based on our intuitions as second language performers, that inflectional morphology would show more rule judgments, while word order phenomena would tend to show more feel judgments. This was found (51% rule judgments for items probing morphology, 35% for word order). It was a surprise, however, to find such a high percentage of feel judgments; one would expect ESL students (studies I and II) to rely more on feel than foreign language students (study III), as the former are in a richer acquisition environment. Perhaps our American subjects understood the instructions better or were in general less "rule oriented" than the foreign students were.

The German data allows us to consider the question of the use of the first language in making these judgments as we know here the first language of all subjects and the number of subjects used was large. Consider only the

responses to the sentences with negation. Here, reliance on the first language rule would consistently lead to wrong responses. Subjects typically reported "feel" as the basis for their judgments for sentences probing negation (82%) and had good accuracy (92%), indicating that for these items "feel" responses referred to acquired competence in the target language and not the use of the first language. (The high accuracy shown here and concurrent high use of "feel" is contrary to our initial hypothesis that "easy " rules tend to be done "by rule" and hard rules by feel. This is discussed below.)

We have demonstrated here that second language performers do utilize their feel for grammaticality as a basis for making judgments, despite the use of a measure that encourages the use of conscious rules. We have also shown that evidence exists to support some possible generalizations about these responses. There is some support for the hypothesis that more difficult items tend to be judged by "feel". Also, morphological items tend to be judged by rule, while word order phenomena and stress may, in general, be acquired. These generalizations, however, may be limited just to the beginning or intermediate formal learner only, and only when tests are used that encourage the use of rules.

The kind of subject we used in these studies, the formal learner, is probably able to successfully apply conscious rules to simple aspects of grammar that have not yet been acquired, when the conditions for the use of conscious rules are met, that is, when enough processing time is available, and when the performer's attention is on grammatical form. We hypothesize that such students will make correct grammaticality judgments for two kinds of rules - those that have been acquired ("by feel"), and a subset of the rules that he or she has not yet acquired - those that have been learned ("by rule"). This kind of performer will err on items that have not yet been acquired and that have also not been learned, possibly because they are complex. Our studies were not designed to test this deeper hypothesis.

More generally, we suggest that the adult acquires aspects of grammar is an order common to all acquirers.[1] In Monitor-free performance adults will simply perform acquired items correctly, but will not perform non-acquired items consistently correctly. If the adult is a Monitor-user, that is, if he or she relies on conscious rules, when conditions are right for rule use (enough processing time and focus on form) he or she may use conscious rules to perform certain non-acquired items correctly. These will be the

non-acquired items that are easy to conceptualize. A clear case of such an item (late acquired/easy to learn) is the third person singular ending. Various researchers have noted that adults do have success in boosting performance for this item when time is allowed and form is emphasized (Larsen-Freeman, 1975; Krashen, Sferlazza, Feldman, and Fathman, 1976; Scott and Tucker, 1974; Birnbaum, Butler, and Krashen, 1977).

Very advanced performers and non-Monitor users also run contrary to the "hard-easy" hypothesis. Advanced second language performers may show very high accuracy for hard rules under all conditions, and may perform variably for some easy rules depending on conditions. Non-Monitor users, those, who for some reason do not use conscious learning in performance (Krashen, 1977b), will simply perform inconsistently on all non-acquired items, easy or hard.

Future research will thus test the deeper hypothesis that the learned grammar is used for those aspects of grammar that are not yet acquired but that are, in a sense, easy to learn. While we expect some variation among individuals, some slight variation in order of acquisition (Krashen, 1977c), and perhaps more variation with respect to what is easy and what is hard, the hypothesis is testable. A developmental study might also settle the issue of whether performers need to utilize conscious rules before acquiring: We suspect that some "easy" rules will appear to progress from "rule" to "feel", but that many "hard" rules, if internalized, may be acquired right from the start. (For discussion of this point, see Krashen, 1977c.)

Footnote.

1. This statement of the hypothesis is too strong. There are some differences between first and second language acquisition order for grammatical morphemes. Child second and adult second orders are quite similar for grammatical morphemes, however. See Krashen, 1977c.

TABLE ONE

Grammaticality Judgments: ESL Students

1. Count/mass

sample item: ("Pick the most correct sentence.")

a. There were many people at the concert.

b. There were much people at the concert.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 26 (18%) | 121 |

2. Singular/plural

sample item:

a. The teacher bought five bottles of ink for his class.

b. The teacher bought five bottle of ink for his class.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 18 (13%) | 118 |

3. Article

sample item:

a. He usually listens to a little music after dinner.

b. He usually listens to little music after dinner.

c. He usually listens to the little music after dinner.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 55 (52%) | 41 |

4. Tense

sample item:

a. Mary was studying when Joe came to the door.

b. Mary studied when Joe came to the door.

c. Mary studies when Joe came to the door.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 34 (27%) | 92 |

TABLE TWO

Stress Judgments: ESL Students

| time | rule | feel | percent correct |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3% | 97% | 83% |
| 2 | 44% | 59% | 93% |
| 3 | 32% | 78% | 88% |

time 1 = before instruction (n = 11)

time 2 = after about three hours of instruction (n = 11)

time 3 = after two weeks (n = 10)

TABLE THREE

Grammaticality Judgments: German as a Foreign Language

1. Inflectional morphology (includes articles, demonstrative adjectives, case markings after prepositions, direction-location case usage, etc.):

   sample item:

   a. Ein Flugzeug ist über das Haus geflogen.
   b. Ein Flugzeug ist über dem Haus geflogen.
   c. Ein Flugzeug ist über des Haus geflogen.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 164 (49%) | 173 (51%) |

2. Word order (includes verb position in subordinate clauses, negation, time and place adverbs, position of direct and indirect objects):

   sample item:

   a. Heute studieren wir nicht.
   b. Heute nicht studieren wir.
   c. Heute studieren nicht wir.

| feel | rule |
|---|---|
| 151 (65%) | 82 (35%) |

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